

It is a life issue important to seniors throughout our Nation. I urge Members to support the House Republican prescription drug plan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

KEEP AMTRAK RUNNING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I have the honor of representing the North Shore of Massachusetts; and, like many of my colleagues, I am deeply concerned about a possible Amtrak shutdown and the effect on my constituents. I am doubly troubled by the fact that this situation was avoidable and totally unnecessary. Congress is now being asked to step in and help after the administration failed to take action.

Mr. Speaker, 23,000 workers across the country fear job losses. A shutdown will mean lost jobs for thousands of employees already demoralized by years of wage deferrals and wage freezes that have left Amtrak workers among the lowest paid in the industry. A thousand jobs have been lost already in the past months, as Amtrak has cut corners in the absence of government support. We cannot allow additional jobs and benefits to be lost.

Local commuter rail riders have voiced their fears about being left stranded by a possible Amtrak shutdown. Failure to act now will mean suspension of Amtrak service in the busy Northeast Corridor, and this will jeopardize commuter rail services for Massachusetts' communities such as Lynn and Salem in my district, not to mention the likely permanent loss of the system's long-distance trains.

Amtrak's current financial difficulty is a result of unwise and unattainable congressional goals established in 1997 that forced unfortunate managerial choices and undermined Amtrak's financial viability and access to capital. Congress realized it made a mistake and has since repealed the 1997 requirement that Amtrak file a plan for its own liquidation if it not achieve operating self-sufficiency by the end of 2002.

Unfortunately, the damage has been done, and it is imperative that Congress correct its public policy misadventure. We are at the point where Congress has to step in and offer some assistance.

As today's Boston Globe reports, "Rail shutdown would be a slap to the region. Amtrak ridership is on the increase." The article notes that ridership in the Northeast Corridor was up

23 percent in May, with a 44 percent growth in revenue over the last year. Over the years, and particularly since the terrorist attacks of September 11, Amtrak ridership in the Northeast Corridor has decreased traffic at the airports, providing another option for people to travel for business and pleasure.

We should reward, not punish, this good service with increased Amtrak investment. Indeed, every G-8 country knows the value of investing in mass ground transportation. All of them support their national passenger rail system. Amtrak is held to a double standard as no other segment of America's transportation system is forced to meet the capital and operating needs without substantial government financial assistance. Amtrak has responded to the growing expectations placed on the passenger rail carrier since September 11; and Congress should, too.

America needs better energy and environmental policies. Rail service conserves energy as compared to other forms of intercity transportation. A 1999 Congressional Research Service report determined that general aviation uses more than three times the energy used by Amtrak. Passenger rail service generates less air pollution and less energy than the airplane and the automobile. This is even more significant in high-density areas.

Mr. Speaker, let us compare Amtrak with investments in airports and highways. Overall, our highways, aviation and mass transit programs receive almost \$57 billion in annual government investments, but Amtrak only receives 1 percent of that. \$571 million is slated for fiscal year 2003.

□ 1845

Amtrak has only received \$25 billion in Federal funding over the past 30 years in comparison with \$750 billion spent on highways and aviation during that same period. We can and we should do better.

While administration critics propose to shut down Amtrak because not every route is self-sufficient, we should note that the airlines received \$150 million this year alone in Federal funding to provide air service to 80 cities where passenger revenues were insufficient to support the provision of service. Amtrak is a bargain by comparison to that.

That is why I join my colleagues and asked appropriators to provide sufficient supplemental funding to keep the trains running. The administration seeks to privatize, their solution for government programs they just do not like, from Social Security to prescription drugs, all the way to mass transportation. The fact is, privatization is not the answer. We only have to look at the tragic accidents, delays and system failures in Great Britain to know that privatization does not work. For the security of our commuters, our workers, our environment and our economy, we must keep the trains running. Shutting down Amtrak is clearly

not in the public interest. I urge the administration to listen to the American people and respond with a thoughtful, sensible plan to keep Amtrak going.

AMTRAK

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNs). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to continue the discussion this evening on the future of Amtrak. There is a rumor going around the Capitol that Senator BYRD has put together a rescue that ties together the supplemental, the debt ceiling vote with resources that will keep Amtrak going. If that rumor is true, I say good for Senator BYRD for making it happen, but I say shame on Congress and the administration for making it necessary for yet another extraordinary step to keep America's passenger rail system going.

This is sadly part of the 30-year history where Congress and numerous administrations have done their best to dismantle and slowly bleed Amtrak to death. What is perhaps most remarkable, Mr. Speaker, is not that we may be able to rescue Amtrak from being shut down this week, but that despite the system that has been inflicted upon them, they continue to exist and ridership continues to increase.

It was a rather bizarre deal we saw in 1997, an exercise in denial on the part of the then-majority parties in Congress where they mandated in the last reauthorization a program under which for the next 5 years Amtrak would become self-sufficient. Part of that deal was that Congress, the Federal Government, would supply adequate resources to deal with the capital requirements for Amtrak, not unlike what happens in other industries where the United States, for instance, provides the infrastructure for aviation. There are now some in the administration and sadly some in Congress who are arguing, Shut it down. It is not self-supporting. They did not keep the deal.

Well, Congress provided less than half of the money that was authorized. In no year did we provide the full capital allocation. Yet despite that, despite that, we have seen ridership increases that is not just passengers with train nostalgia. In the Pacific Northwest, we have seen almost three-quarters of a million people ride the Cascades rail corridor last year. Ridership has increased sixfold over the last 8 years. We have heard about the situation that is taking place with ridership increases here in the eastern corridor. And all of us in Congress are well aware that if it were not for Amtrak, that sad week of September 11, without Amtrak, if people were relying on their SUVs and waiting for the grounded planes to travel, that there would have